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ABSTRACT

The U.S. Hispanic population is increasing faster than the non-Hispanic White population, and during the first half of the 21st century, the United States will have a "minority majority." California will reach that status in the next 4-7 years. Focus should not be on the "threat" that Latino population growth brings, hoping to return to a Whiter time, but rather on finding rational solutions to the problems that will ensue when the minority group becomes the country's majority. Latino children form the second largest group of U.S. children but are undereducated. About one-third of high school dropouts are Hispanic, and Hispanics are well below national averages in reading proficiency, writing performance, mathematics proficiency, and SAT scores. Causes of low educational attainment among Hispanics include poverty, limited English proficiency, migration, gang affiliation, high teen pregnancy rates, poor health, and fear of violence in schools. Suggested solutions include enhancing parental involvement in children's education, training teachers to be more sensitive to the needs of children from other cultures, teaching parents the importance of their children's education, making curriculum more relevant to today's students, and recognizing that Latinos fall into at least five well differentiated groups ranging from poor migrant workers to third-generation middle-class Mexican Americans. Includes tables and graphs of demographic and educational data. (TD)

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And this, Amigos, Is (Again)? The Decade Of The *Hispanic!*

By Carlos A. Bonilla

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Education Problems of Hispanic Youth

We have a major sociological crisis in our midst, a sort of national health epidemic caused by the severe undereducation of a particular ethnic group: *Hispanics.**

Health? You ask...yes, because this crisis affects the well-being of this great nation and its ability to survive against tough, mounting competition in international markets. Health? Yes!! What would the hospital chart read like in this emergency case?

Patient:	**Hispanic youth**
Symptoms:	**Failure to thrive**
Diagnosis:	**Chronic educational malnutrition**
Status:	**Critical**
Treatment:	**Case too complex to suggest easy resolution**
Prognosis:	**Poor**

But not all is lost! As in the case of critical and complicated medical cases the best approach to making the correct diagnosis, finding solutions and suggesting potential treatment regimes is to discuss the patients' history and the reasons for their demise in a detailed-but-honest-and thoroughly open manner. So let us do just that, and perhaps, this critical patient-Latino youth-will after all make an unexpected but miraculous recovery.

Bueno, pues aqui vamos!

Gracias. Muchisimas gracias.

*Throughout this work the terms Hispanic and Latino are used interchangeably. Hispanics, an ethnic group, can be of any race!

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U.S. Population Demographics

For the first time since, at least, the 18th century the number of Hispanics being added to the U.S. population now exceeds that of non-Hispanic whites. This turning point in the history of U.S. demography occurred during fiscal year 1993-94 when, according to the latest census figures, the Hispanic population increased by 902,000 while the non-Hispanic white population increased by 883,000. This pattern was repeated during fiscal year 1994-95 and is expected to continue well into the next century when, for the first time, non-Hispanic whites, will make up less than 50% of the nation's population. In other words, around the first half of the 21st century, the United States will become a **"Minority Majority"**; California, however, is expected to reach the minority majority status during the next four to seven years. The actual numbers (1994-1995):

Non-Hispanic Whites:	193 (millions)
Blacks:	31.5
Hispanics:	26.9
Asian/Pacific Islanders:	8.0
Native Americans:	2.0

What are some of the inherent problems associated with this unprecedented growth? Consider:

- The majority of voters are white and increasingly unwilling to fund anything having to do with minorities.
- The Non-Hispanic White population is entering the aging/senior ranks in greater numbers than other groups.
- Consequently, the work force is becoming increasingly made up of minorities.
- Not far into the future seniors are going to be dependent on the social

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security taxes paid by young minorities in the labor market.

- Latinos are highly over represented in jobs that are becoming obsolete because of rapid advances in technology.

Let's not forget, however, that about one-third of the Hispanic population growth is derived from immigration; what this means is that predictions can turn out wrong if drastic changes in immigration policy are instituted at the Federal level. But, all things considered, the nation must remember:

"Latinos are not going to go away or disappear".

In similar fashion to the recent developments in South Africa ***WE MUST*** not focus on the "threat" which Latino population growth brings, hoping to return to a "Whiter Time", but on finding-through honest and effective debate-rational solutions to the problems ensuing when the minority group becomes the country's majority!

Latino Undereducation

No question about it: The Latino population is growing in this country-by leaps and bounds-and their kids form the second largest group in the U.S.

Growing in numbers, yes! But not thriving!!

Why? Because they face education, health and poverty woes which-in the present political and social climate-are very difficult to surmount; and here is a frightening, but true, statement: ***Their problems are worsening***!

First, the numbers picture alone is huge:

Children's Population (millions)

	1990	1996
Non-Hispanic White	49.2	50.8
Hispanic	9.8	12.0
Non-Hispanic Black	10.4	11.4

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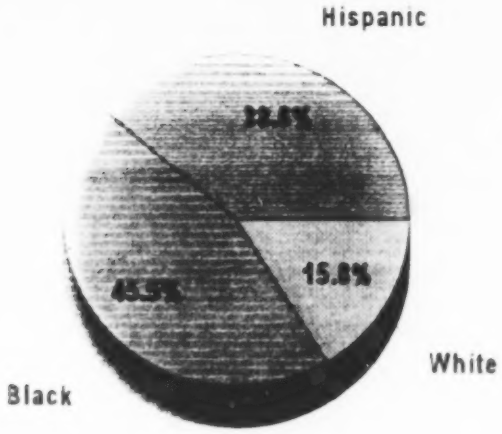
Poverty Rate in Children



Undereducation, from the early stages:

Head Start Participation (%)	
White	35
Black	38
Hispanic	14
Other	15

To the high school graduation stages:

Dropout Rates for 12th Grades (%)	
Hispanic	18
White	9

The actual numbers are so large that we must view the high degree of under education among Latino youth as a national crisis; according to U.S. Department of

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Education figures close to one-third (29.4%) of high school dropouts 16-24 years old are Hispanic compared to 13.7% in the black and 7.7 in the white populations.

For Latino students in school the achievement levels continue to be well below national averages: consider:

Average Reading Proficiency for 4th Graders
(Public Schools, 1994)

	Average	White	Black	Hispanic
Region	213	223	187	190
North	213	225	185	192
Southeast.	209	220	190	186
Central	219	225	184	200
West	213	223	188	187

Average Writing Performance (1992)

	4th	8th	11th
All Students	207.1	274.4	287.3
White	216.7	279.2	294.1
Black	175.0	258.1	263.2
Hispanic	189.4	265.0	273.6

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Mathematics Proficiency (1992)

	9 year old	13 year old	17 year old
All Students	229.6	273.1	306.7
White	235.1	278.9	311.0
Black	208.0	250.2	285.8
Hispanic	211.9	259.3	292.2

SAT Score Averages (1993-94)

	Verbal	Mathematical
All Students	423	479
White	443	495
Black	352	388
Mexican American	372	427
Puerto Rican	367	411
Asian American	416	535
American Indian	396	441

Latino Under Education: Root Causes

Hispanics are an extremely diverse group of people which makes it very difficult to generalize when attempting to define and identify specific causes to problems affecting their population. Nowhere is this fact more apparent than in the discussion of educational attainment but, nonetheless, some statements can be made with certainty:

1. Poverty relates directly to under education

   Large differences exist between socioeconomic groups; the most recent data (1992) available illustrates this point:

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Hispanic Dropout Rate (16-24 y.o.)

Low Income Families	44.7(%)
Middle Income Families	25.2
High Income Families	9.6

2. Among Hispanics educational levels vary widely:

Educational Attainment*

	5th Grade	H.S. Graduate	BA/BS
Puerto Rican	8.2	59.8	8.0
Mexican	15.4	46.2	5.0
Cuban	5.3	62.1	16.5
Central S. American	7.3	62.9	15.2
Other Latinos	3.8	68.9	15.1
Non-Latino Whites	.8	84.1	23.8

*(% of those 25 years of age or older)

3. English proficiency and school retention correlate well.

   Hispanic students who have poor command of standard English have inordinately high dropout rates amounting to 62% compared to 17% in those who speak English well.

4. Migration contributes to high Hispanic dropout rates.

   True, since 43% of those born outside the mainland U.S. quit school before the 12th grade (1987 figures for 16-24 year Olds). Migration, however, does not explain the problem since-for the same year-first generation Hispanic-Americans had dropout rates of 17.3% and second-generation 23.7%. The fact remains: About one third of all Hispanic youths fail to complete their high school education and in some urban areas less than half will go on to graduate.

5. SAT scores for Hispanic students have improved some over the years: unfortunately, they remain about 40 points lower than the national average.

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Other factors: Gang affiliation, high teen pregnancy rates, poor health and fear of violence in the schools, among others, play a role in the low educational attainment of Latino youth; these fall outside the scope of this discussion but-by all means-should always be kept in mind.

Solutions: Do any Exist?

Government agencies, both federal and state, have been grappling with issues related to Hispanic undereducation for several decades and all to no avail. Over the years the problems have worsened. The numbers are too vast, the issues too complex but, be that as it may, I suggest these solutions to one of California's, and for that matter, this nation's major educational problems-the extremely high dropout rate of Latino public school students.

Schools need to:

- Enhance parental involvement in their children's education.
- Improve the quality of teaching professionals; they need to become more sensitive to the needs of children from different cultures, those whose native tongue is not English.
- Teach parents the importance and value of their children's education.
- Improve curriculum, make it more relevant to what today's students, not the establishment, perceive as necessary for both survival in the real world and success in the labor market.
- Avoid lumping all Latino children into one class, the so-called "Hispanic"; if educational reform is to be effective, Latinos must be separated into at least five well-differentiated groups, which range from the poor migrant worker family to the third or fourth generation middle class Mexican-American family.

The parents of Latino students must be made to feel welcome in the public school system; they must be made to realize that their opinion is valued and meritorious. Their continued exclusion from the system will only exacerbate the demise of K-12 education.

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